

COMPREHENSIVE NURSING SERVICES, INC. / COMPREHENSIVE HOME HEALTH  
SERVICES  
COMMUNICATION CONTINGENCIES FOR EMERGENCIES/DISASTERS

Electronic communication systems include both phone systems and computers. Power outages may be a result of storms, terrorism, fire, or water damage to the office as well as other incidents that can happen. Incidents such as chemical spills, earthquakes, epidemics, or police activity may prohibit entry to the office for lengthy periods of time.

Types of communication emergencies are classified in the following way:

Class 1 – disruption for a few hours – may be a power outage from a storm, downed utility pole, local involvement only.

Class 2 – More serious but less than 72 hours – minor fire, delayed power restoration, affects office operations.

Class 3 – More than 72 hours – Major fire, major power outages, affects office operations.

Class 4 – More than 72 hours – major power outage, affects larger areas, impact affects office operations and patients.

Class 5 – major disaster affecting entire community or region.

This plan will be effective in tandem with the overall disaster plan. The designated communications officer will coordinate these efforts to maintain communication with administrative personnel, field staff, and patients.

Procedure

Office in Operation – Class 1

1. Determine nature and scope of the problem: internal, external, local, statewide, nationwide.
2. Determine the expected duration of the event.
3. The office phone system has a backup battery lasting up to 12 hours. Use land lines as much as possible to conserve cell phone batteries and allow the towers to be clear for first responders and civilians trying to locate family members.
4. In the event of a long-term power outage, phone to be forwarded to designated on-call staff.

Office Not in Operation

In the event of a Class 2, 3, 4, or 5

1. Determine nature and scope of the problem: internal, external, local, statewide, nationwide.
2. Determine the expected duration of the event.
3. Since there may be major disruptions in communication processes, various plans may be used to maintain communication with staff and patients:

- a. If the current emergency involves only Maryland, CNS employs a staff member in Delaware. All phone lines are digital and can be easily transferred to cell phones or another land line. This is done by accessing a web-based application that administration, on-call staff, and communication officers have access to and requires a two-step authentication to access for security. If internet access is unavailable, this change can also be done by calling Comcast which has many call centers located both locally and nationally.
- b. CNS also has the capability of using a Voice Over IP (VOIP) to make calls without cell phones or land lines, using a Wi-Fi adapter to internet. These applications enable CNS to send mass text messages to give instructions and/or updates to staff and patients in a temporary location or even mobile. It can provide quick and detailed communication, but unlike traditional modes of communication like radios, it supports two-way communication.
- c. As in the 9/11 incident, phone lines (especially cellular) were jammed. CNS will make every effort to stay in contact with staff and patients during the emergency.
- d. CNS uses Google Suite, a HIPAA compliant cloud-based service which houses patient info such as demographics but no clinical information. CNS also uses Axxess Continulink, a HIPAA compliant electronic medical record system, with physical locations and backup processes in several different locations throughout the country, improving the probability of maintaining access to the site in the event of catastrophic disasters.

#### Recovery

1. Resume operations as soon as possible.
2. For a total loss, operations will resume at a new location as described in the complete plan.
3. A rotating back up system of all patient information exists and will be uploaded once a new server is secured.

This plan will be effective in tandem with the overall disaster plan. The designated communications officer will coordinate these efforts to maintain communication with administrative personnel, field staff, and patients.

\*\* A copy of this policy will be posted to our website so at any time patients, field staff, and administrative staff can access the most current policy from a mobile device. In the event of a disaster, the website will indicate the classification of the disaster and change accordingly as the classification could potentially increase or decrease throughout the emergency.